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MEDIA RELEASE

Health Coalition fully supports bill banning 2-tier clinics, increasing fines and expanding public access

The Ontario Health Coalition is calling for Ontarians to put their full support behind a new Private Member's Bill introduced by Liberal Health Critic Dr. Adil Shamji to be debated in the Legislature this evening. Almost a full year ago, Health Minister Sylvia Jones promised to take action to stop private clinics where Nurse Practitioners had started to charge patients user fees for access to health care. For years, both Premier Doug Ford and his Health Ministers have sworn that no patient would have to "use their credit card, only their OHIP card" while in reality allowing private clinics to charge patients a growing array of user fees and extra-billing. Patients are being charged hundreds of dollars in fees for access to primary care and thousands of dollars for access to needed surgeries and diagnostic tests. Such charges are what our Public Medicare laws were set out to prevent.

[Bill 203, Keeping Primary Care Fair Act \(Restricting Private Payments for Nurse Practitioner Services\), 2024](#), requires the government to expand publicly funded access to Nurse Practitioners in primary health care (family health teams, community health centres, other primary care models) and in public hospitals. At the same time, it requires the government to act decisively to uphold our Public Medicare legislation and stop user fees for patients. It sends a clear message by doubling the fines for all private clinics and individuals who are charging these unlawful and illegal user fees.

"We have always whole-heartedly supported Nurse Practitioners as a vital part of the health care team and in leading Nurse Practitioner primary care clinics. However, where our support ends is when they charge patients directly for needed health care services," said Natalie Mehra, the executive director of the Ontario Health Coalition.

Ontario's nurses are the advocates for their patients. Nurse leaders in Ontario and across Canada have, since the inception of Public Medicare, championed and led the fight to expand public health care and stop cuts, privatization, and two-tier Medicare. "Just as it would never be acceptable to say that doctors who want more money can extra-bill or charge user fees to their patients for access to needed health care services, the same principle applies to nurses," said Ms. Mehra.

Up until now, noted the Ontario Health Coalition, the use of Nurse Practitioners has expanded under public funding in hospitals, teams and standalone nurse-led clinics. When the previous Liberal government brought in Nurse Practitioner-led clinics, they were funded publicly. They were not allowed to charge patients for needed health care services. The recent break with the cornerstone principles of Public Medicare under the Ford government is both unnecessary and unacceptable. The Coalition applauds and fully supports Dr. Shamji's Private Member's Bill, and further calls for an end to the corporate privatization of the ownership and control of our primary care including virtual care. The Coalition is non-partisan and advocates for the public interest in our health care system. The Ontario Health Coalition previously supported NDP Health Critic France Gélinas' Private Member's Bill, [Bill 24, Health Care is Not for Sale Act \(Addressing Unfair Fees Charged to Patients\), 2022](#), that called for license suspensions or revocations for health professionals and private clinics charging unfair fees, user fees, and extra-billing patients.